



THE BIBLE AND THE RIGHTS OF LABOR.

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The Bible contains the revelation of a double theology or rather, two distinct but mutually necessary knowledges or sciences of God. One is a revelation of the divine nature, attributes and providence so far as human language can do so; and the other is a revelation of the divine will regarding the conduct of persons and society. Thus there is a *mystic* theology and an *ethical* theology. The one is the telescope and the other the microscope by which the mind is aided in its search for God Himself, and for God's law itself. The two give a knowledge which the human intellect, left to itself, could not naturally reach. But when this knowledge is revealed, by the supernatural instruments, then the intellect is able, by its natural faculties of observation and reason, to discover that the revelation is demonstrable truth.

Now, it is possible to read the Bible merely for the purpose of learning its mystic theology; and, at the same time to pay only very superficial attention to the ethical theology it contains. I have met many persons who know the letter to perfection, but who have only reflected on what it tells us of the supernatural world; the Trinity; the Fall of Man; Free Will; Predestination; the Incarnation; the divine nature of Christ; Miracles; the Atonement; the Judgment; Heaven, Hell, Purgatory, Limbus, the Resurrection, Eternal Life, etc., etc. These mysteries are beautiful, true and good—delectable to know, and conducive to salvation; but they are not separately complete or sufficient. Adepts in the Bible when they content themselves with these only, do not seem to be aware that they have only a defective or

vague idea of the moral polity taught in the book. Most generally, they have seen nothing in it contrary to what is taught by modern Political Economy in favor of competition, the legitimacy of gain-gotten riches, hard bargains imposed by the capitalists on the laborers, and the like. But if such persons would also study the Bible, with the honest and zealous intention of finding out what it teaches on the subjects just named, they would, I think be astonished to learn how little they previously knew of the principles and rules of moral and social economy which the book expositis and practically decrees.

The general principles from which its morals and social economy are deduced, as every body sees and admits, are the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man (Mal. 2, 10; 1 Jno. 3, 1-10; Job 31, 15; Prov. 22, 2; Acts 17, 26); the common heirship of men as the children of God (Rom. 8, 17; Gal. 4, 7; Ep. 3, 6; Jas. 2, 5); the inseparableness of God and neighbor love, Jno. 5, 2; Matt. 22, 35-40; the equality of the love due to self and the neighbor: Rom. 12, 10-15; 1 Cor. 12, 12; 1 Jno. 4, 20-21; and the perfection there is in a voluntary sacrifice of self to society and neighbors, as if they were our own body and members. With these are faith, hope and charity; trust, obedience and patience; unenvious poverty, meekness, commiseration, justice, forgivingness, purity, conciliativeness, and indomitable righteousness.

But, not confining itself to generalities, the Bible does not leave us entirely to find for ourselves how to carry its precepts into practice, according to what selfishly biased judg-

ment might suggest or attenuate; but amplifies them in many parables, examples and explanations. Specific instructions on many points and methods are given; so that the true meaning and tendency of the abstract and general expression of its doctrines and rules as applicable not only to individuals but to society also, may not be misunderstood.

Thus on the rights of labor, there is a profuseness of such specific teaching, in the Bible. It presents us with a complete system of social economy, as based on the rights of labor.

A detailed exposition of this proposition would make a voluminous book; but I have only the space of a chapter at my disposal, and must therefore content myself with making a short and condensed statement of the main points of the science of social economy as they are set forth in Scripture. The texts and illustrations on each of the points are so numerous that the required brevity compels me to cite only a few, and invite the reader to search for the rest,—yes, —to read the Bible attentively from one end to the other, while having before the mind the questions of temporal government and economic policy which now agitate the world.

Search the Scriptures, and you will find that it is the divine purpose that *honest labor should be rewarded by ABUNDANCE*. True the abundance of Eden was exuberant; and at the Fall the ground was cursed, so that hard labor became necessary to make it produce bread. But with this requirement of labor abundance was not denied. Prov. 28, 19. On the contrary, God's design is that there shall be *abundance from LABOR*; and that abundance (sometimes called riches, Deut. 8, 18), shall be enjoyed by the laborer himself. Even this curse upon the ground was partially removed after the flood: (Gen. 8, 21). Then, when God led his chosen people out of cruel bondage and excessive toil, it was to a land where their labor would be requited by a profuseness of products good for their bodily appetites

and comforts. To this, however, as in Eden, there was a condition, that of righteousness,—obedience to the commands by individuals, and more essentially by the nation or society itself; for, it was inevitable that individuals, however just, would suffer from the evils consequent upon the sins and deviations of the mass of the people, or of the nation as such: Deut. 8: Prov. 14, 34. 'Woe to the world because of offenses! woe to that man by whom the offence cometh: Matt. 18, 7. 'If you [the people] will hear the voice of the Lord, he will send forth a blessing on thy storehouses and the work of thy hands; but if you do not serve him with joy and gladness of heart for *abundance* of all things, then thou shalt be cursed.' Deut. 28. Thus there is a triple idea conveyed, in which righteousness, labor and abundance are connected as inseparable. Isa. 32, 16-17; and 65, 13; Deut. 15, 5 *et seq.* Lev. 26, 4; Deut. 7, 13. If they obey and serve him they shall spend their days in prosperity and their years in pleasures: Job. 36, 11. Psal. 128, 2; *etc., etc., etc.* In regard to the requirement of labor the Bible is explicit. It is the individual himself who has done the work, or he and his kindred and others that have helped him to do it, who have a right to take and enjoy, or share in brotherhood the result, the product, the fruits. God's justice itself is to be measured out to 'every man according to his works.' Matt. 16, 27; Rom. 2, 6; Jer. 32, 19. 'Every man shall receive his own reward according to his *own* labor.' 1 Cor. 3, 3. 'Let every man prove his own work, and so he shall have glory in himself only and *not in another*; for every one shall bear his own burden,' Gal. 6, 4, 5. 'We labor, working with our own hands.' 1 Cor. 4, 12;—'so as to want nothing of any man's.' 1 Thes. 4, 11,—'and have something to give to him that suffereth need.' Eph. 4, 28. Clearly, this language excludes those who claim as their own, the work done by their ill paid hirelings; but the point is made still more explicit.

'He that plougheth should plough in hope, and he that thrasheth, should hope to receive the fruit?' 1 Cor. 9, 7-9-10; 2 Tim. 2; 6. 'We should not eat any man's bread for nothing?' 2 Thess. 3, 12. 'We charge them that working with their own hands—they eat their own bread?' 2 Thess. 3; 12. A man has a right to enjoy 'the good of all his labor,'—'rejoice in his own works,'—'it is his portion,'—'this is the gift of God.' Eccles. II, 24; III, 3, 12, 13, 24; V, 18, 19, 20. I could cite many more passages.

Search the Scriptures and you will learn that God regards the POVERTY OF THE PEOPLE as a social evil and a wrong. | The prevention and removal of poverty in general is the purpose of the divine lawgiver, when legislating on temporal concerns. If under providence, there must be instances of individual and transitory distress resulting from accident, sickness, and failure of crops, still it is God's design, as I have shown, that the great number should have abundance by their labor; and that these by hospitality, liberality, neighborly assistance, and leading without increase should do away with all exceptions to the general welfare. 'There shall be no poor nor beggar among you?' Deut. 15, 4, (Sept. version). 'If one come to poverty, thou shalt not harden thy heart, nor close thy hand, thou shalt lend him that which thou perceiveth he hath need of;' V, 7, 8, 11. No excess of individual prosperity is intended, but a just medium. 'Give me neither beggary nor riches; give me only the necessities of life; lest perhaps, being filled, I should deny and say: Who is the Lord? or, being compelled by poverty, I should steal, and forswear the name of God.' Prov. 30, 8. But, the divine policy in this matter is shown by the *institutions* established to prevent or remove poverty. The TITLE TO LANDS and all natural things is reserved to the divinity: Deut. 10, 14; Ps. XXIV; I, 10, 11, 12; LXXXIX, 11; Hag. 2, 8; Job, 51, 11. Ownership by man is denied. Man is vested with mere

usership, and this as a trustee, for he is bound to distribute to the poor, the needy, the widow, the orphan, and the stranger; Lev. 25, 23; Deut. IV, 1, 40; VIII, 19; X, 18, 19; XI, XIV, 29; XXVI, 11, 12; XXVIII, 1. The lands are divided among the heads of families, so that each family shall have a holding in proportion to its numbers and ability to actually cultivate. Num. 26, 53; 33, 54. It is ordered, that every one should have such a cultivable field, so that there would be no occasion for hiring land or labor. To secure this as much as possible, perpetual alienation is forbidden; and redemption from even temporary alienation is guaranteed. The vendor, or any member of his family for his benefit, may redeem the land on refunding to the purchaser a part of the price proportioned to the number of years which have to run till the jubilee. Every seventh year all debts are cancelled. So also bond servants are restored to freedom. Deut. 15, 12. The cultivator after he has gathered his crop of grain or fruit, is prohibited from going over it again to glean the remnants, but must leave to the poor neighbors. Deut. 26, 19; Lev. 19, 10. Every third year a tithe of all products is set apart for the widow, the orphan, and hospitality to the stranger. Deut. 14, 28. Relatives in distress have asylum in the family homesteads. In the fiftieth year, the jubilee, all return to their ancient heritage, and resume possession free of all debt, charge or other incumbrance: Lev. 25. But this was not all; for besides these affirmative institutions, there were prohibitory laws made to prevent the poverty of the people.

Search the Scriptures and you will learn that God forbids the MONOPOLY OF LAND. 'Woe to you that join house to house and field to field, even till there is no place;' Isa. V, 8. How wonderful is the foresight of the effects of such a monopoly! It is declared that it must result in desolation; houses without inhabitants, and uncultivated fields, or deficient produc-

tiveness; v. 9, 10. Now, in this very day, we see that this very consequence has followed land monopoly in England and Ireland, where the fruits of the great expanse of lands held by the large appropriators diminishes every year; it was to prevent such monopoly; give stability to every family, create communities of kindred, and make every cultivator secure in 'the work of his hands,' that God divided the land among the children of Israel so as to settle relatives close to each other; and that he also vested an inalienable usership of given parcels of land in the several families and their next and subsequent heirs from generation to generation. Num. 33, 54; Lev. 25, 28.

Search the Scriptures and you will find that, under the land laws of Israel, RENTS and MORTGAGES were ILLICIT. Any apparent title to them was a fraud or a violent usurpation. It could not bind the heir or widow of the giver, nor even the giver himself, beyond the sabbatical year or jubilee. Moreover, when under this limitation, a gain seeker bought the use of land for the time till the jubilee, he was in constant danger of eviction from the right of redemption; and if in the meantime, he let out the land to others he could exact only equitable rent. Nehem. v, 1-13.

Search the Scriptures and you will see that USURY (that is any interest whatever), is forbidden. Lev. 25, 35-37. 'Thou shalt not lend upon usury to thy brother; usury of money, usury of products, usury of anything that is lent;' Deut. 23, 19-20. 'If a man hath lent money upon usury, or taken any increase—shall such a one live? He shall not live; he shall surely die;' Ezk. 18, 8-13; Exodus 22, 25.

Search the Scriptures and they will declare unto you that PROFIT BY TRAFFIC is displeasing to God. It is clearly shown by the Rev. Jesse H. Jones, in his excellent work on the 'Bible Plan for the Abolition of Poverty,' that 'usury' is gain upon loans, but 'increase' is gain upon traffic. They are equally reprov'd and closely

connected as clearly shown by that great Pope Benedict XVI, in his Bull *Vix Pervenit*, issued in 1745. Our Lord finding tables of money changers and stalls of huckstery in the temple, cast them out with the keepers, invoking the words of the old Testament: 'My house shall be called the house of prayer but you have made it a den of thieves.' Matt. 21, 12-13; Isa. 56; Jer. 7, 1-11; Mark 11, 15-16-17. Luke 19, 45-46. 'Through covetousness they, with feigned words, make merchandise of you;' 2 Pet. 2, 3. 'They go into the city to buy and sell, and to get gain;' Jas. 4, 13. 'They take the widow's garment and her cow in pledge,' Deut. 24, 17; Job 24, 3. 'They lurk secretly (hide snares) for the innocent, fill their houses with spoil, so are the ways of every one that is greedy of gain,' Prov. 1, 11-13-19. 'He that withholdeth corn (hides up, monopolizes any merchandise), the people shall curse him,' Prov. 11, 26. 'The getting of treasures by a lying tongue is a vanity, tossed to and fro of them that seek death;' Prov. 21, 6. The trader seeking gain is tempted to cheat, Hos. 12, 7; to lessen the measure and increase the price; to use deceitful balances, weights and measures; to sell the refuse of the corn (unsound goods); to possess the poor for a pair of shoes (extortionate prices); Amos 8; to devour the poor; to despoil them and grind their faces; Isa. 3, 15; be as greedy dogs which can never have enough; Isa. 56, 11; to lie in wait like fowlers, setting snares and traps to catch men; Jer. 5, 26; to greedily take increase and gain from neighbors by extortion; Ezk. 22, 12. 'No man should overreach or circumvent his neighbor in business;' 1 Thess. iv., 6 (Cath. version). To avoid the sins pointed out by these texts, there is only one way. It is equitable exchange,—exchange on the basis of equal measure of labor-time for labor and its fruits. No other measure conforms to the great moral equation: 'Love thy neighbor as thyself.' 'As ye would that men should do unto you, do ye

unto them?' Luke 6, 31. Hence after the renouncement of the greed of gain, and the adoption of the principle of neighbor-love, *equality* becomes the law of exchanges: 2 Cor. 8, 14.

Equitable prices are legitimate; but the expectation of much gain makes the merchant a borrower, paying usury to him who has gold and silver in his purse. Hence the merchants and their traffic and enormous accumulations of gain-gotten merchandise, are denounced in the prophecies made against Tyre and Babylon, those ancient emporiums of trade, which the great cities of modern times resemble in every particular. It is as if Ezekiel and St. John intended to draw moral and commercial descriptions of London, Paris, New York and the rest: Ezek. 26, 27; Rev. 28. Their merchants are the great men of the earth, and by their sorceries (artifices and allurements) are all nations deceived, v 5, 23.

Search the Scriptures and you will discover that God did not design the hiring of labor; but foreseeing that men availing themselves of their liberty to sin, would disobey the land-laws and trade-laws promulgated through Moses, and that many, by monopoly, traffic, and usury would be deprived of their homesteads and reduced to poverty and servitude, He requires the payment of ADEQUATE WAGES to servants and workmen. 'Masters give unto your servants that which is just and equal, knowing that ye also, have a master in heaven,' Col. 4. 1. 'Turn not away thy eyes from them when thou makest them free,' Deut. 15; 18; 'thou shalt not let him go away empty: but shalt give him for his way, out of thy flocks, and barn and wine-press,' 15, 13-14. 'Thou shalt not oppress an hired servant, thou shalt give him his hire; let not the sun go down upon it,' Deut. 24, 14-15. 'Woe unto him that useth his neighbor's service without wages, and giveth not (equitably) for his work,' Jer. 22, 13: Joo 31, 39. 'I will be a swift witness against those that

oppress the hireling in his wages,' Mal. 3, 5. 'Behold the hire of the laborers, kept back by fraud, crieth; and the cries have entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth,' Jas. 5, 4. 'The laborer is worthy of his reward,' Tim. 5, 18. In several places it appears that the hired men should be treated as members of the family, and similar treatment is prescribed even towards a slave. Long hours, short wages and heavy burdens are entirely incompatible with the obligations, the reproofs and precepts which religion imposes. Therefore God reprehends the 'hard tasks' which the Egyptians required the Israelites to perform; the changes or cut-downs which Laban made in Jacob's wages; and the burdens which the rich and luxurious Pharisees laid upon the people. Ex. 1, 11; Ex. 3, 7; Ex. 5, 6, 7-10-13-14; Mat. 23, 4.

Up to this point, I have only called your attention to the Mosaic institutions preventive of poverty, and to the legislation upon those particular causes of poverty, Land Monopoly, Rents, Usury, Profits, and Labor-hire: but the general law and cause remains to be noticed. The cause of all these is COVETOUSNESS or the *greed of riches*, and its final purposes idleness and luxury.

The Bible is profuse in its denunciations of the RICH and their misdeeds,—*OF RICHES and its evils*. Read the terrible judgment pronounced by Jesus Christ against the rich and riches, Matt. 19, 21—30; and then assure yourself that it confirms and fulfils the ancient law. What can be more severe than the accusations brought in the 24th chapter of Job? With these two references I might be content; but I may as well refer to a few among the many more. 'Lay not up to yourselves treasures on earth,—where thy treasure is, thy heart is also;' Matt. 6, 19. 'You cannot serve God and Mammon,' Matt. 6, 24. 'Woe to you who are rich for you have your consolation,' Luke 6, 24. 'Every one of you that doth not renounce all he possesseth cannot be my disciple,'

Luke 14, 33. See the fate of Dives, Luke 16, 19. 'They serve not Christ our Lord but their own belly,' Phil. 3, 19; Rom. 16, 18. 'They that will become rich fall into temptation, and into the snares of the devil, and into unprofitable and hurtful desires, which draw men into destruction and perdition; for the desire of money is the root of all evil,' 1 Tim. 6, 8-9-10. The rich are not to be honored as such: Jas. 2, 1-6. 'Go ye now ye rich men, weep and howl in the miseries that shall come upon you,' etc. James 5, 1-6. 'Babylon is fallen, her riches, luxuries, mills, ships, harpers, gold, silks, ivory, jewels, marble palaces, perfumes, fine merchandize of all kinds, merchants who were made rich, have in one hour come to nought, Rev. 18th. 'They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment they go down to hell; Job. 21, 13. They remove the old land marks,—reap the field that is not their own, cause the poor to go without clothing, to go hungry, to be houseless: Job 24. The rich afflict the soul of the tillers of the soil: Job 31, 39; 'Covet not robberies; if riches abound set not thy heart on them,' Ps. 62, 10. 'Riches shall not profit in the day of judgment,' Prov. 11, 4. Labor not to be rich: Prov. 23; 4. 'He that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent,' Prov. 28, 20. 'They are a generation whose teeth are as swords, and their jawbones as scythes to devour the poor and the needy,' Prov. 30, 14. 'Woe to thee that spoileth,' Is. 33, 1. 'Woe to him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong, a large house, and large chambers, with great windows, ceiled with cedar and painted with vermilion,' Jer. 22, 13-14. 'They tread upon the poor, tare from him burdens of wheat, to build houses of hewn stone, and to plant pleasant vineyards,' Amos 7. 'They devise iniquity in their beds, and when the day dawns they rise to practice it, and to take the fields they covet,' Micah 2, 2-3. 'They eat the flesh of my people, flay them, break their bones and chop them up; the

Lord will hide his face from them,' Micah 2, 3-4. 'Woe to him that increaseth by that which is not his own,' Hab, 2, 6.

On the other hand the POOR AND POVERTY ARE EXALTED. God espouses the cause of the poor. The first word the Lord Jesus uttered when he began to teach, was to declare that he was anointed to preach the gospel to the poor; Luke 4th, 18. The first verse of the Sermon on the Mount promises heaven to the unconvetous poor: Matt. 5. The last law which shall be invoked on the day of judgment is that which makes the poor man a personification of Christ himself: Matt. 25, 40. He was himself a poor man; and we read that 'being rich, he became poor for our sakes.' 2 Cor. 8, 9, Matt. 4, 8. Both testaments are full of texts proclaiming the dignity of poverty, and the rights of the poor against oppression, extortion and the like. Justice to the poor is continually and inexorably demanded. 'Go sell what thou hast and share with the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven;' Matt. 19, 21. 'Hath not God chosen the poor of this world,' Jas. 2, 5. 'The wicked in his pride doth persecute the poor;' Ps. 10, 2. 'Blessed is he that understandeth concerning the poor;' Ps. 40, 1. 'Defend the poor and fatherless, do justice to the afflicted and needy, deliver the poor and needy, rid them out of the hand of the wicked;' Ps. 82, 3-4; Ex. 3, 7-8. 'The just taketh notice of the cause of the poor;' Prov. 29, 7. The king [or government] that judgeth the cause of the poor in truth, his throne shall be established forever;' Prov. 29, 14. He that oppreseth the poor upbraideth his Maker, but he that hath mercy on the poor honoreth God: Prov. 14, 31.

BUT THE POOR SHALL BE DELIVERED, shall be restored to their heritage and rights. The considerable number of passages promising and prophesying this restoration is remarkable. 'The triumphing of the wicked is short; he who wrongs the poor shall perish forever like his own dung.

His children shall seek to please the poor, and his hands shall restore their goods. His meat is the gall of asps within him. He has swallowed down riches, but he shall vomit it up again; God shall cast it out of his belly. According to his substance shall the restitution be. Because he hath oppressed the poor, taken away the house he builded not,—he shall not save of that which he desired. There shall none of his meat be left. The heaven shall reveal his iniquity, and the earth shall rise up before him: Job 20, 5-7-10-15-18-19-20-21-27. 'The needy shall not always be forgotten: the expectation of the poor shall not perish forever:' Ps. 9, 18. 'For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, I will arise, saith the Lord:' Ps. 12, 5: Ps. 72nd; 12, 13, 14. 'The meek shall eat and be satisfied:' Ps. 22, 26. 'The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein forever:,' Ps. 37, 29. 'The Lord will maintain the cause of the afflicted and the right of the poor:' Ps. 140, 13. See description of the reign of Christ, Isaiah 11: and of the New Jerusalem, Rev. 21 and 22. 'The beds of ivory, the musical instruments, the wine, the banquets of the rich and luxurious shall be removed:' Amos 6. 'Every man shall sit under his vine and fig tree, and there shall be none to make him afraid:' Micah 4, 4: Zeph. 3, 12-13; Zech. 3, 10. 'And they shall build houses and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards and eat of them. They shall not build and another inhabit: they shall not plant

and another eat; they shall not labor in vain:' Isaiah 65, 21-23.

But I check myself. The passages of the Bible directly and impliedly concordant with those I have quoted, are numerous to overflowing. I have marked so many that to quote them all would make a volume. Read from the same point of view, and no doubt you will find all I have found, and even many more. What is called 'wickedness' or 'sin' in the Bible, is not only impiety, or rank murder, or theft, but also the violation of the economic system dictated to Moses. Usurpation of land, accumulation of property by injustice to labor, or by any artifice, or force, or law, depriving the workman of the fruit of his toil—rent, profit, and usury, these also are wickedness and sin. There is a steady current flowing all through, from the first chapter of Genesis to the last of Revelations, vindicating and demanding the rights of the poor against the cupidity and rapine of the rich and powerful: and against the extortions and extravagancies of rulers and legislators.

Now, having quoted these detached texts, it remains for me to say so incomparably grander are the the context of the Book itself, to feel as a mere child beating the mense atmosphere with a little or dipping up, with his small, weak hand, a few drops of the mountain waves, thundering surges, and boundless expanse of the majestic ocean of divine language and law.

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